

RENAISSANCE®

Reading success

IN
Surrey

We spoke to Caroline Woolridge, the school librarian at Glyn School, and Jade Phillips, the KS3 coordinator, about how the programme has influenced both students and teachers at the school.

“I can read more in English lessons and in other lessons, like Geography. I feel better in my lessons now.

- Kyle, Year 7 student at Glyn School

“We can make a real difference to their learning.”

Glyn School is a boys' comprehensive secondary school in Ewell, Surrey, with around 1,700 students. They have been using Accelerated Reader for just over a year, and implemented the programme in the summer of 2018 to boost literacy levels across Key Stage 3.

Unengaged readers

We began using Accelerated Reader (AR) with Years 7-9 because they have a scheduled reading lesson on their timetable, but many of them were reluctant readers and were definitely not making the most of this time. A lack of enthusiasm and drive was prevalent: but it only took one half-term with AR to turn this around!

We were amazed to see a complete overhaul of attitudes towards reading. Pupils who started with low reading levels quickly saw a rapid increase in their ability – and we're talking about quite a few pupils here! But it wasn't just the literacy progress that filled us with joy, but also the overall attitude to reading and the confidence that seemed to flourish within the structured focus of the programme.

Now our general reading culture has transformed across the whole school. We've been able to use the data provided through quizzing and testing to identify key target areas for students, and we've actually seen an improvement in behaviour as they're now receiving the support and the necessary intervention to help them succeed. Our library lessons have benefitted greatly from the programme as we are now able to differentiate accordingly and have clear, targeted conversations with students to ensure they're able to access the right books and progress in their reading.

We're seeing students eager to use the library before, during and after school to take AR quizzes and to take new books out, and this is because they can now receive immediate feedback on their reading from the programme, the librarian, and the teachers present in the

library. The atmosphere really is brilliant! With the programme, they're also very engaged in selecting books not only for themselves, but also for the library stock, and therefore other students.

The data AR produces is invaluable. It's really driven a whole-school focus on the beneficial impacts reading can have across the curriculum, and has been the reason for our new form-time activity: 'Register and Read'!

Supported by data

Getting the most out of the assessment side of the programme – Star Reading – was important for us too and we wanted to ensure that all staff across the school had access to the information. From the data that we extracted from the Star Reading assessments, we discovered some big surprises! Multiple pupils were two or three years below their chronological reading age. But now, we're able to ensure that no one is going unnoticed: the Star Reading data makes it impossible to miss these students.

Previously, students who found it hard to access learning – because of their lower reading abilities – were often disruptive or disengaged in lessons, but now we can use the data to target these students and make a real difference to their learning across the curriculum. All staff have access to a key student spreadsheet, where information is continuously updated. Thanks to this sheet, we've created a 'Read to Succeed' mentoring programme – a programme consisting of 1:1 reading support with Year 12 and 13 students. This was a huge success and helped the younger students tremendously! Without Accelerated Reader, we would not have had the necessary information and data to target those with urgent needs.

Conversely, we're actually also seeing a greater proportion of pupils reading at the top of the spectrum and, subsequently, we're focusing on ensuring that these students are receiving the support necessary to keep them engaged and challenged with their reading. This year, we're challenging them to take the Vocabulary and Literacy quizzes alongside the general Reading

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Practice quizzes, to help them self-identify areas for development.

Value for money

The positive results we're seeing from Accelerated Reader and Star Reading are evident throughout the school. Reading confidence and regularity has clearly improved for all our pupils. But we're seeing big benefits for the teachers as well! Now, lesson planning incorporates data from Star Reading, with teachers targeting specific pupils based on this differentiation. If pupils fall under the radar and begin to decline in their reading progress, we can pick them up quickly and react appropriately. We all recognise just how important reading is, and we can ensure that we are meeting the needs for each and every individual pupil.

We've only had Accelerated Reader and Star Reading for just over a year now, but we can say with confidence that we've definitely got value for money – we don't know what we'd do without them now! There was a significant amount of time required in the initial setting up and training when we first implemented AR throughout the school, but the benefits easily outweigh the set-up time.

Setting up for the future

And on a final note: one of the most important benefits of using Accelerated Reader and Star Reading across Key Stage 3 is the exam preparation it gives pupils before they transition into KS4 and begin their GCSEs. We've even kept a small number of Year 10s on the AR programme to ensure their basic literacy and decoding skills continue to develop, giving them a much better chance of seeing success in exams and in the future.

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